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NPIC/D-265/70

26 AUG 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

SUBJECT : A Conference with [ ] Concerning the NPIC  
Historical Contributions

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1. This morning [ ] came over and talked to [ ] and me concerning the NPIC historical contributions. Gene has just recently replaced [ ] as the DDI Historical Officer. He requested this conference so that he could give us the benefit of some of his thinking to assist us in our work on the NPIC historical contributions. The main points follow.

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2. Gene first spoke about the desire of those in the historical program to have story-type outlines rather than skeletal outlines. He said the experience in the program has been that unless the authors have thought through the organization of their contributions and have spelled out the interrelationships of the various parts in some detail, it has been found that substantial revision is commonly required after a considerable amount of work has been done. He pointed out that the story-type outline would take longer to prepare but that it should pay off in the long run by ensuring a more effective application of the work effort. It is my understanding that the outlines to be submitted by both Earl and Gordon should be of the story type.

3. He next spoke about the distinctions between chronicle and history. This is a point to which both Earl and Gordon have already been exposed. Not only is this point taken up in [ ] book, but it is also the subject of a brief paper prepared by [ ] for those working in the Agency historical program. In other words, they want interpretive history and not merely a chronology of facts on a year-by-year basis.

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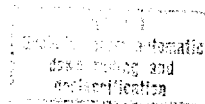
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4. In the same vein, Gene pointed out that the history itself does not necessarily flow in smooth stream, even though the activity in an organization goes on day after day, week after week. He pointed out that there tend to be periods of time during which very important things happen separated by other periods of time in which many of the activities are rather routine. From the point of view of those in the historical program the desire is to focus attention on these important nodal points in the evolution of an organization, and to treat in summary fashion the intervening time during which relatively few important things happened.

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5. He said that he likes to think, as many others do, of history as changes that take place over a period of time. He added that these changes are in response to certain causes. He wanted to stress the fact that in writing an interpretive history it is desired that causes be given for events that have taken place, that actions or products be evaluated, that, if products, an indication be made of how they were received by the requester.

6. Gene also speculated that it is unlikely that all things that took place were a success. He pointed out that histories should be an objective presentation of the accomplishments - the failures as well as the successes, the conflicts that took place between persons and organizations, and that none of this should be covered up. He did concede, however, that points of conflict might have to be treated in a rather diplomatic manner. In any event, it is important that when differences of opinion, or stresses having an important bearing on the functioning of an organization are recognized, these should be pointed out and analyzed.

7. He cited one manuscript in which no person was named in the first 99 pages. At that point only casual mention was made of the name of the current office chief, who happened to have been the fourth in the line of succession. Since history very importantly deals with people, those in the historical program are especially anxious that personalities be identified and their role in the history of an organization shown.

8. He mentioned one matter of technique, namely, notetaking. He said that an enormous amount of time can be saved by Xeroxing documents not readily available for future reference. At the same time he pointed out the saving in time compared with note-taking.

25X1 9. In closing, he spoke about deadlines. He stressed the fact that [ ] is imposing severe pressure from the top to get the historical contributions done, and he urged that work get under way on all assigned contributions as soon as possible. Though he made no attempt to imply or request that NPIC work should be done on a full-time basis, he dwelt at some length on the generally disappointing experience up to now in trying to get the historical work done on a part-time-basis.

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Contributions

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10. He left with an expression of his availability and an offer to give whatever assistance he can on any problems that develop. He is clearly anxious to see the work move ahead smoothly.



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Historical Officer  
National Photographic Interpretation Center

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